

Horace A. Dibble House
90 North Main Street
Cortland
Cortland County
New York

HABS No. NY-5591

HABS
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12-CORT,
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5591

HORACE A. DIBBLE HOUSE

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Location: 90 North Main Street, Cortland, Cortland County,
New York

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. Donald F. Ames

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Ames

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement
of Significance: A good example of the Cortland architecture of the
period 1830-1840, and believed to be one of the
oldest remaining structures in the City of Cortland.

PART I. HISTORIC INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

1833 - Horace A. Dibble purchased land June 1, 1833 from
Mr. M. Merrick. Deed recorded in Book U, page 192,
Cortland County Clerk's Office.

Horace A. Dibble, born November 21, 1801, was the
son of Lucy King Dibble and Ebenezer Dibble, who, in
1809, had traveled by wagon from Green River, Columbia
County, New York, (a small village near the
Massachusetts state line), to Moravia, New York.
They settled on a farm west of the inlet to Owasco
Lake. In 1821, Horace came through Cortland on
foot in search of work as a wool carder and cloth
dresser. Passing up North Main Street on his way
to Homer he saw a nail factory with a saw mill
behind it on Otter Creek that he vowed to one day
possess. After his marriage to Emaline A. Scranton,
February 2, 1831, the mill he desired came up for
sale and he purchased it in 1833 from Martin
Merrick. He moved his young family to Cortland,
converted the mill for his business, and operated
it for fifty years. He had six children, the first
born before the move to Cortland:

Evaline A.	born April 15, 1832
Perkins K.	born July 31, 1835
Horace S.	born October 29, 1838
Orson G.	born April 3, 1844
Frank G.	born November 4, 1846

Horace Dibble died February 17, 1890 at the age of 88. He had been one of the founders of Grace Episcopal Church, and a trustee of Cortlandville Academy.

- 1866 - Horace A. Dibble sold the home to Evaline A. Dibble November 6, 1866 for \$1. Deed recorded in Book 82, page 498, Cortland County Clerk's Office.
- 1899 - Evaline A. Dibble by warranty deed to Frank G. Dibble, January 10, 1899. Deed recorded in Book 177, page 59, Cortland County Clerk's Office.

The youngest Dibble child, Frank G., outlived all the other children and was the last to possess the property. He maintained an "Old Curiosity Shop" above the woodshed (now the garage). An Ithaca motion picture concern used his house as a location for some pictures, probably "Judy of Rogue's Harbor". Norma Talmadge may have acted here. Mr. Dibble played a mailman once, according to Mr. Ross Bartlett of Cortland, N.Y. (Letters from Mr. Ross Bartlett, Mrs. Amelia Gross Underwood, and Mrs. Fred Bently are in the possession of Mrs. Ames.)

- 1933 - Frank G. Dibble willed to Hatti E. Dibble and at Hatti's death to go to Amelia E. Gross. Will recorded in Book 11, March 31, 1931, Cortland County Surrogate's Office.

Hatti lived in Onondaga and Amelia lived in New York City. The house was left unoccupied until 1936.

- 1936 - September 6, 1936, Hatti and Amelia signed the house over to N. Jay Peck and Albert H. Gross, executors of Frank G. Dibble estate. The contents of the house were sold at auction on November 20, 1936, at the Emerald Building at Central Avenue and Church Streets, William G. Crandall of Homer, auctioneer, and A. H. Gross and N. J. Peck, executors.
- 1936 - N. Jay Peck and Albert H. Gross, executors of Frank G. Dibble's estate, sold the house to Mr. and Mrs. Fred R. Bentley, October 29, 1936. Deed recorded in Book 175, page 496, Cortland County Clerk's Office.
- 1937 - Mr. and Mrs. Fred R. Bentley sold the house to Dr. and Mrs. Erwin V. Moore, September 22, 1937. Deed recorded in Book 175, page 496, Cortland County Clerk's Office.

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1944 - Dr. Erwin V. Moore sold the house to Mr. and Mrs. Donald F. Ames, April 22, 1944. Deed recorded in Book 193, page 581, Cortland County Clerk's Office.

2. Date of erection: Approximately 1833, after Horace A. Dibble had purchased the land.
3. Architect: Unknown.
4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: House built by local labor using local lumber and stone. Suppliers of glass, hardware: unknown.
5. Original plan and construction: Original house built in three stages by Horace A. Dibble. The first stage contained three rooms (See floor plan, rooms 1, 2 and 3) in the two-story main section of the house entered by the existing front door. The second stage was the addition of a room (4 on the floor plan) at the southwest corner of the house. The third stage consisted of a room (5 on the floor plan) adjoining the west wall of the original house and the north wall of the previous addition. All three stages were built in a relatively short period of time. Basement excavated only under main section of the house, crawl space under stage two. Off the original kitchen (4 on the floor plan) is a well-house. The superstructure has its original clapboards and the cobblestones for nine feet down to the water level are original. The original oak bricket with a leather flap in the bottom is still in use.
6. Alterations and additions: House renovated and landscaped by Fred R. Bentley in 1936 and an addition to the north of the house (room 7 on floor plan) was converted into a garage in 1938. Room added by Donald F. Ames in 1958 to the west of the original house with a semi-octagonal west end (6 on floor plan).

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with Structure: Original house built by Horace A. Dibble. Mr. Dibble came to Cortland in 1833; he founded the "Dibble Carding Mill" located a few yards to the west and connected to the house by a wooden sidewalk. He kept the mill in operation for fifty years. The mill was one of Cortland's original industries. Mr. Dibble was also a founder of Grace Episcopal Church in 1847.

C. Sources of Information

1. Old Views: Photograph of house in its original condition owned by Mr. and Mrs. Donald F. Ames.

2. Primary Sources: Excerpts from paper on "The Horace Dibble Family" by Elizabeth Scott Ames presented August 11, 1965 before the Cortland County Historical Society. Also, Mrs. Johnson of the Cortland County Historical Society. NY, 12-Cort, 1-
3. Bibliography:

Elder, Clare. Horace Dibble. Unpublished theme, Cortland County Historical Society, 1949.

Kurtz, Morriss. Cortland Past and Present. Binghamton, N.Y., Republican Book and Job Print, 1883, page 37.

Mainer, Margret. "Cortland House Retains Colonial Charm", (Syracuse) Herald American, May 9, 1955.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An example of the early Greek Revival style of architecture of the Southern Tier region of New York State.
2. Condition of Fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 51'-4" x 46' including all appendages; one-and-a-half stories, three bays.
2. Foundations: Rubble stone, some cobblestone. Cinder block under 1958 room (#6).
3. Wall construction: Clapboard, painted white.
4. Structural system: Corner braced, chestnut and pine studs. Walls 12" thick.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: No porches on original house. Front door approached by three stone steps from the local quarry on Benham Hill.
6. Chimneys: One small brick chimney in old section, larger brick one in middle of L-addition (original kitchen).
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Front doorway with side lights of five rectangular panes, six-panel door, wide

entablature with four fluted pilasters the height of the doorway.

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- b. Windows and shutters: Twelve-over-twelve on first floor and nine-over-nine on second floor of original house; wooden louvered shutters on exterior of original house, still in use. Some original hand-blown cylinder glass.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape and covering: Gable roof, original wood shingles covered with composition shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Original house has a boxed eave cornice with a simple return at the gable end.
- c. Dormers: Dormers on second floor of east and west elevations of L-addition are a 1936 addition.

C. Description of the Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: See photocopy of sheets for floor plans of first and second floor.
- 2. Stairways: Presently only one stairway remains. Originally there were two, the present one as shown on the floor plan, and a second leading from room #1 to the second floor. It was removed in 1936.
- 3. Flooring: Original pine and chestnut flooring throughout with the exception of the rooms located over the garage.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Original hair plaster throughout painted or papered.
- 5. Doorways and doors: All doorways and doors original with the exception of the kitchen and garage doors.
- 6. Notable hardware: All doors have original hand-made wrought iron locks and latches.
- 7. Lighting: Electrical.
- 8. Heating: Two fireplaces, trim of original fireplace was moved to the second floor fireplace. Sunburst trim on first floor fireplace comes from a farm in Homer, N.Y. Installed by Bentley,

- D. Site and Surroundings: The Dibble House faces east on a generally level plot. The original smoke house is still on the property in the large yard to the west and north of the house.

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Prepared by Richard A. Rusin
University of the State
of New York
Cortland State Teachers
College
January, 1964

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation of structures in the Southern Tier of New York State, undertaken by HABS in cooperation with the Cortland County Historical Society and the Valley Development Foundation, Inc.

The project was under the general supervision of John Poppeliers, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. The historical and architectural material was prepared in January, 1964, by Richard A. Rusin of Cortland State Teachers College. Photographs were taken by Jack E. Boucher in April, 1966. The project was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Constance Werner Ramirez, August, 1974.